

Monmouth Minute

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October 2024

HALL OF RECORDS



Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners

Thomas A. Arnone, *Director*; Ross F. Licitra, *Deputy Director*;
Susan M. Kiley, Dominick "Nick" DiRocco and Erik Anderson

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Commissioner Director



I am thrilled to present the second issue of “The Monmouth Minute”! In this edition, I will spotlight key initiatives and programs that drive economic development, enhance transportation services, promote tourism, and expand shared services across our great County.

Wellness Challenge for Employees

I am excited to announce the launch of the first-ever Director’s Wellness Challenge, aimed at promoting health and wellness among Monmouth County employees. Running from October 1 through December 31, 2024, this challenge encourages employees to achieve 5,000 steps per day for at least 20 days each month.



As many of you know, I am passionate about personal health, and I wanted to create a fun way to get our employees moving. Exercise boosts mood, concentration, and overall health, and I hope everyone will join me in making fitness a priority. For more

information about this Challenge or other County initiatives, visit www.visitmonmouth.com.

Economic Development: Supporting Monmouth’s Growth

As the liaison to the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development, I oversee the “Grow Monmouth” initiative, a vital part of our County’s economic growth strategy. A key program under this initiative is Made in Monmouth, which supports small businesses that manufacture consumer products.

This program hosts two annual events, each drawing more than 200 vendors and over 4,000 attendees. The next Made in Monmouth event is scheduled for Saturday, December 14, 2024, from 10 a.m.– 4 p.m. at Brookdale Community College. This is an excellent opportunity for local businesses to showcase their products while helping residents shop local.

For more information on Made in Monmouth or other business support services, contact the Division of Economic Development at 732-431-7470.



Tourism: 2025 Travel Guide Photo Contest

My fellow Commissioners and I are excited for the return of our annual cover photo contest for the 2025 Monmouth County Travel Guide. This Guide will be seen by thousands across the Country, featuring events, activities, and lodging options to make any trip to Monmouth County memorable.

We invite everyone to submit their best shots that could serve as the perfect cover photo for next year’s Guide. To submit a photo, visit www.MonmouthCountyTourism.com. The deadline for submissions is November 15, 2024.

Engineering & Traffic Safety: Rumson-Sea Bright Bridge Progress

The Monmouth County Division of Engineering is making significant progress on the Rumson-Sea Bright Bridge replacement on County Route 520. A major milestone occurred on September 16, 2024, with the start of the bascule span installation, involving steel beams and the counterweight system. These components were brought in by barge and set using a crane.

Additionally, roadwork on State Route 36 has begun in preparation for roadway tie-ins scheduled for Spring 2025. For updates on closures and delays, visit the project website: www.rumsonseabrightbridge.com.

Shared Services: Strengthening County Partnerships

Monmouth County’s Office of Shared Services continues to lead in reducing costs and increasing efficiencies for municipalities, authorities, and emergency services. I am proud that this initiative has become one of the most successful programs in the state.

Thomas A. Arnone

We are pleased to introduce Tara Zajack as the County's new Shared Services Coordinator. Tara will oversee expanding shared service projects to meet the needs of our communities. This fall, Monmouth County will host a Shared Services Summit, providing an opportunity for municipalities to collaborate on future initiatives.

For more information on shared services or the summit, visit www.visitmonmouth.com or contact Tara at 732-577-2925.



America's 250th Anniversary Is Coming In 2026!

As we approach America's 250th Anniversary in 2026, Monmouth County will proudly celebrate both the birth of our great nation and the pivotal role our County played in the fight for independence. Monmouth County was a key battleground in the cause of freedom, and in the nearly 250 years since, it has grown into a thriving community—an ideal place to live, work, and play.

County Clerk Christine Hanlon and I, along with the Monmouth250NJ Committee, have been hard at work planning numerous events and initiatives to honor this historic milestone. Stay tuned for all the exciting announcements coming soon!

Lastly, I want to express how honored I am to serve as your Commissioner Director. It is a privilege to work alongside dedicated individuals and organizations to enhance the lives of Monmouth County residents. Together, we are driving growth, supporting our communities, and making our County an even better place to live, work, and visit.

Letter to the Editor

I have received questions about the County's interest and intentions in relation to the Monmouth Executive Airport and wanted to provide County residents with an update and a better understanding of where things stand. Many of these questions are in response to misleading statements, personal attacks and paid advertising by the airport owner – yet he has never addressed the central concern of safety.

We began evaluating the airport's future after hearing a variety of concerning reports about safety and security from Monmouth County residents, pilots, and passengers of aircraft utilizing the airport. These accounts not only were troubling but rose to a level that required further investigation.

As a transportation hub and a major County asset, we need to ensure that the airport is a safe, secure and viable resource that will serve the public for years to come. We are committed to the airport remaining an airport. That is why we enlisted Merchant Aviation, a highly regarded international airport consultant, to evaluate the condition of the airport and its financial viability. They will report back to us to help determine next steps, if any.

At this time, absolutely no decisions have been made regarding the airport's future and no actions have been taken beyond beginning this investigative process. Recently, and after the County began talking about the airport, the owner paid a \$16 million debt to the federal government that had been outstanding for over a decade. If our interest was the impetus to fulfill this obligation, that is an important step forward and we are glad to see it. But this does not address our primary concerns about the airport's safety and security.

The repeated personal attacks and misinformation that the owner is spreading is offensive and intended to deflect from the facts.

Additionally, the owner has promised to demolish many of the blighted and dilapidated buildings that populate the airport property. We hope he keeps to this promise as these structures have been of particular concern, especially to the residents of Wall Township.

While these steps taken by the owner are promising, our safety and security concerns remain. The airport has languished for many years without any real improvements to the runway or infrastructure. We will await our consultant's report which will be shared with the public. Transparency is essential in all actions the County takes and we look forward to sharing Merchant's finding with you. We will also keep you apprised of any decisions the County makes and any steps we may take.

Commissioner Deputy Director Ross F. Licitra

As the colder months approach and 2024 comes to a close, I'd like to recap the past few months and discuss some exciting plans for the near future.

The summer season here in Monmouth County is always an exciting time! There's so much to do and explore, from our beautiful beaches, top-notch restaurants, breweries, wineries, over 30 park areas, and six pristine golf courses. And of course, our flagship event of the summer, the 49th Annual Monmouth County Fair, which is the best in the State and saw record numbers this year.

This September, the Board of County Commissioners, in partnership with the Monmouth County Park System, held the September 11 Memorial Ceremony at Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook in Atlantic Highlands. A beautiful and solemn ceremony honoring the 147 Monmouth County residents who lost their lives on that tragic day. Mount Mitchill is home to Monmouth County's 9/11 Memorial, at 266 feet above sea level, this overlook in Atlantic Highlands sits on the highest natural elevation on the Atlantic seaboard (excluding islands) from Maine to the Yucatan, providing beautiful views of Sandy Hook, Sandy Hook Bay, Raritan Bay, and the New York skyline.



Protecting and preserving our beautiful 18,091 acres of landscape will always be our top priority. As the liaison to our County Park System, I'm thrilled to announce, on behalf of the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners, that we are creating a new park on Route 34 North along the Holmdel and Marlboro border. This 62-acre preserved forest, known as part of Pleasant Valley, is perfectly suited for hiking and biking trails. We hope to welcome visitors in 2025.

As part of our ongoing efforts and initiative to improve public access to area waterways, we are preserving an acre of property on the Shark River basin in Neptune City. Formerly a small boatyard, the Riverview Avenue property will

open in 2025 for wildlife observation, crabbing, fishing, and enjoyment of the beautiful views of the water.

In the meantime, take time this Autumn to rediscover Monmouth County's natural beauty. Trail enthusiasts can enjoy over 140 miles of recreational trails throughout the County! These trails traverse some of the most scenic and natural areas. The Park System, in coordination with the County Sheriff's Office, recently completed the installation of state-of-the-art security cameras and emergency phones on the Henry Hudson Trail, Thompson Park, Dorbrook Recreation Area, and the Manasquan Reservoir so residents can feel safe as they enjoy the parks.

Make sure to check out all the happenings, activities, programs, and events that our County has to offer! Visit monmouthcountyparks.com and visitmonmouth.com, and also, follow us on social media.

I am looking forward to the coming months and 2025, and as always, remain committed to serving the residents of Monmouth County to the best of my ability.

Commissioner Susan M. Kiley



As a County, we have found success by going out into the community and meeting people where they're at to find out what we are doing well and what we can do better. These past few months have been filled with opportunities for us to assess some of the feedback and requests we have gotten from our residents and take action.

As a result of the overwhelming response and number of calls to the Monmouth ACTS Navigation System, we are adding a warmline social worker and two additional service coordinators to better serve the needs of our residents. We are also working with the Monmouth ACTS communication team to develop a marketing plan to ensure residents have a full understanding of the Navigation System. Additionally, our Division of Behavioral Health continues to raise awareness through community outreach that engages residents and connects them to substance use related services. As a result, Monmouth County has seen a steady decline in fatal overdose deaths from 151 in 2022 to 48 in the first half of 2024.

The Division on Aging, Disabilities & Veterans Services continues to support the needs of older adults, veterans, and caregivers in our community. In partnership with SCAN, the Aging in Place Series was launched to equip older adults with the information they need to stay safe and secure in their homes as they age. This series can be found on the hub's website at www.monmouthadvs.com.

In August, the Division hosted its first Veterans Resource Fair, attracting over 100 attendees and featuring speakers and 30 local service providers, offering valuable support and resources to our veterans. We are excited to announce that this will be an annual event for our residents. Additionally, the Senior Advisory Council, along with the Division, has held four Listening Sessions across the County. These sessions have been instrumental in hearing from residents about their concerns and needs, while also connecting them with resources. These Listening Sessions will continue through 2025 as part of our ongoing commitment to community engagement and support.

As the summer comes to an end, our Monmouth County Health Department is happy to announce that we had a great summer with no beach closures! Still, we remain diligent in anticipating any new viruses by setting up flu clinics throughout the various municipalities and partnering with local pharmacies and clinics to expand the availability of any new vaccines available to continue to keep our residents safe.

Our Mosquito Division has been busy responding to requests from residents and conducting localized adult mosquito control operations by truck in response to evidence of West Nile virus. The purpose of these operations is to knock down the mosquito population to reduce the risk of disease transmission. People are still encouraged to wear repellents and wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors and rid their property of any standing water to continue to help us #FightTheBite!

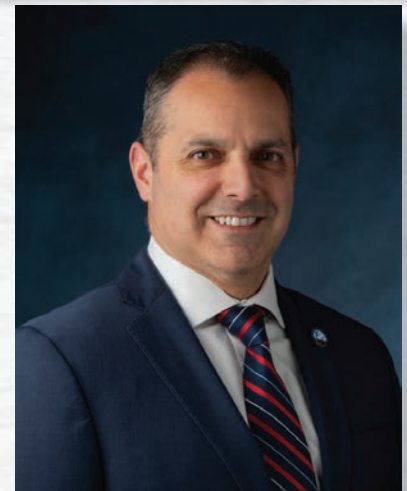
As your County Commissioner, I remain committed to bettering the lives of our residents and look forward to continuing this work every day.



Commissioner Dominick “Nick” DiRocco

Many Monmouth County residents are aware of our beautiful County parks, extensive County library system and top-rated community college, Brookdale Community College. However, fewer are familiar with the Monmouth County Vocational School District (MCVSD), which boasts some of the best high schools, educational opportunities and hands-on training programs for students and families across our County.

The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners is proud that the MCVSD offers six full-time Career Academies, four of which have been ranked in the top 20 “Best Public High Schools” in New Jersey by Niche.com. Moreover, High Technology High School has been ranked the #1 high school in New Jersey by *U.S. News & World Report* and was a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School. These Career Academies welcome students as freshmen and combine rigorous academics with research and field experiences to give students a significant head start on their college and career journeys.



Additionally, the MCVSD offers a range of shared-time programs that provide students with high-quality education and training in disciplines such as electrical trades, automotive technology, nursing, cosmetology, and more. Recently, the District even graduated the first class from its high school welding program; readying students for a high-demand industry in a specialized field.

For adult learners, MCVSD offers a wide array of affordable programs for career certification, professional development, and personal enrichment. The adult education program helps adult and postsecondary students enter the workforce, advance in their current careers or pursue a new one. Helping to address a critical shortage in healthcare professionals, the District also offers a Licensed Practical Nursing program that consistently achieves high ranks.

The impact of these schools and training programs extends beyond individual students. By equipping our residents with college-readiness and practical skills, the MCVSD helps to address broader economic challenges, such as the skilled labor shortage that many industries are facing. According to a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, more than 4 million jobs in the skilled trades remain unfilled, emphasizing the critical need for vocational training. As the landscape of education continues to evolve, the MCVSD stands out as a promising solution to equip students with the high-quality academics and skills needed for today’s economy. The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners will continue to support and invest in the Monmouth County Vocational School District to provide pathways to success for our residents.

As liaison to the MCVSD, I want to thank the remarkable students, faculty, staff and parents that make the MCVSD such a successful program.

For program-specific information, visit the MCVSD website: www.mcvsd.org.



Commissioner Erik Anderson



It's been an exciting and eventful past few months here in Monmouth County. With fall underway, I would like to update you on the work taking place at the County, particularly with the departments I am liaison to.

This past September, I was proud to recognize Monmouth County's Teacher of the Year for 2024-2025, Dr. Sara Mazzone, at a Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners meeting. Dr. Mazzone has been a teacher at Red Bank Regional High School, my alma mater, for over 10 years, and has demonstrated her professionalism and dedication to student success and excellence.

September also marked the official grand re-opening of the headquarters branch of the Monmouth County Library System, located in Manalapan. The Headquarters Branch is home to the Monmouth County Archives; and was recently renovated with new flooring as well as new technology and lighting upgrades. I am also happy to report that the Library System has a new director, Robin Wood, who has hit the ground running.

With Election Day rapidly approaching, the Board of Elections is seeking poll workers! If you are interested in serving, and are a registered voter in Monmouth County, please call the Monmouth County Board of Elections (before October 24) at 732-431-7802, ext. 7150.

The Monmouth County Planning Board recently accepted the Division of Planning's latest transportation study, known as Monmouth PATHS: Access for All. The study examined barriers to mobility in Monmouth County in an innovative way, by combining lived experiences with data analytics to evaluate barriers and recommend tools to overcome them. State, County, and Local officials can use this study as a guide to implement policies that would promote equitable access for all Monmouth County residents to employment, education, healthcare, services, and recreation.

As the holiday season approaches and shopping habits ramp up, the Monmouth County Division of Consumer Affairs is more than happy to provide information on how to avoid consumer fraud and illicit business practices through the Division's speakers' program. The Monmouth County Division of Consumer Affairs can be contacted at 732-431-7902.

The Monmouth County Historical Commission has announced the Historic Preservation Grant opportunity, which offers matching funds to nonprofit organizations and local municipalities for restoration projects on historic structures. The grant deadline is November 1st. For more information, please contact the Monmouth County Historical Commission at 732-431-7460 ext. 7413.

Finally, Monmouth County had the privilege of hosting the Commissioning of the USS New Jersey (SSN 796), the newest addition to the U.S. Navy's submarine fleet. This is the third time in history that a naval vessel is being named after the State of New Jersey, the last of which served with distinction in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. I was honored to participate in the different welcoming events that were held to mark this momentous occasion.



For more updates, feel free to visit Monmouth County's website, at www.visitmonmouth.com. You can also follow my social media pages. @erik_andersonnj on Instagram and 'Monmouth County Commissioner Erik Anderson' on Facebook, and @ErikAndersonNJ on X. It is an honor and a privilege to serve you on the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners.

Administrator Teri O'Connor

The Summer of 2024 was a very busy one here – more than 89,000 people enjoyed our County Fair in July and the County-owned and operated Seven Presidents Beach saw more than 695,000 visitors from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Now, Fall is in full swing – a great time of year in Monmouth County to enjoy outdoor activities like festivals, haunted attractions, and beer, wine, and cider tastings. For more information about Monmouth County happenings, go to MonmouthCountyTourism.com and follow Monmouth County Tourism on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

As the weather grows cooler, consider visiting the County Library System. Headquartered in Manalapan, residents of 39 Monmouth County municipalities have full access to the Monmouth County Library System's 13 branches, including their materials, services, and electronic resources. The 13 branches are located in Allentown, Atlantic Highlands, Colts Neck, Hazlet, Holmdel, Howell, Manalapan, Marlboro, Oceanport, Ocean Township, Shrewsbury, Wall, and West Long Branch. 12 of the 39 municipalities (Monmouth County Library Member Libraries) also have access to their individual town libraries. These member libraries are Brielle Public Library, Eatontown Public Library, Fair Haven Public Library, Keansburg Waterfront Public Library, Little Sliver Public Library, Manasquan Public Library, Monmouth Beach Library, Neptune City Library, Oceanic Free Library in Rumson, Sea Bright Library, Union Beach Memorial Library, and Tinton Falls Public Library (re-opening in November).



As the Director mentioned in his column, County employees are participating in the “Director’s Wellness Challenge” through the end of the year. All employees are encouraged to walk at least 5,000 steps per day for a chance to win an additional day off in 2025. The County strives to provide a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment for all our employees. If you are interested in employment with us, please visit our website at visitmonmouth.com for our job postings. Particularly, we are in search of drivers with CDL certifications – come join our outstanding team!

Did you know that 400,000 tons of garbage are disposed of annually? The County Reclamation Center in Tinton Falls is more than a hole in the ground that is filled with garbage.

Most of us place our trash receptacles at the end of our driveways and forget about it after that. Recycling plays a large role in reducing the amount of trash that ends up in the landfill and the County has an extensive Recycling Program. If you are interested in learning more about recycling, or would like a presentation for your group, please contact Sam Guidetti, Acting District Recycling Director, at 732-683-8686, ext. 8967.

As we enter flu season, the Monmouth County Health Department is working with municipalities to host several flu clinics throughout the County—upcoming clinics are on Tuesday, October 22nd from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in Marlboro, and Wednesday, October 23rd from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Neptune. In addition, there is a Flu, COVID, and Lead Clinic on Tuesday, October 29th from 3 to 6 p.m. in Red Bank. Please see our Health Department Calendar of Events located on the County’s website for more information.

Don’t forget to stop by Made in Monmouth at Brookdale Community College on December 14th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.! Not only will you find unique gifts for everyone on your holiday shopping lists, but we have a special guest from the North Pole who will be available for photos.



Sheriff Shaun Golden

The Monmouth County Sheriff's Office EMS Operations, MedStar, is going strong since its launch in February 2024. These dedicated EMTs provide crucial emergency medical services in the central region of Monmouth County.

MedStar was established at the direction of Sheriff Shaun Golden to enhance response times and ensure top quality emergency medical care. Volunteers play a crucial role in serving communities, but the critical shortage has resulted in a lack of EMS services.

MedStar staff is now proud to be working alongside volunteers and continue to support their efforts, as all ensure that residents receive the highest level of care.

The strategic initiative led by the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, along with the support of the Board of County Commissioners, assists local agencies in need with emergency medical calls and aims to ensure the most timely and effective emergency medical responses for residents.

EMS Crews have responded to more than 3,000 calls with average response times under six minutes.

This past summer, the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office EMS Operation received a generous award from the Department of Community Affairs which is significant to the ongoing efforts of increasing community safety and emergency response.

The funding will be instrumental in strengthening shared service initiatives. Future plans include expanding the coverage area of Monmouth County EMS operations in 2025, the hiring of additional EMTs and growing the fleet of ambulances to more than 15. In addition, all County events will be staffed by MedStar special event units.

Sheriff Golden commends the highly trained full-time and part-time EMS professionals. Their dedication, bravery and compassion help save lives and for that they are truly appreciated.



Clerk Christine Giordano Hanlon

As Monmouth County Clerk, one of my most important roles is serving as Clerk of Elections. We are busy preparing for the upcoming November 5th General Election and letting voters know that high voter turnout is expected on Election Day as it has been in past presidential elections. To avoid potential inconveniences such as long lines at the polls, I encourage Monmouth County voters to vote early either in person or by mail-in ballot.

There are nine days of in-person, early voting from October 26th through November 3rd. Monmouth County voters may cast their ballots at any one of 10 locations, regardless of where they live in the County. For hours and locations, visit [MonmouthCountyVotes.com](https://www.monmouthcountynotes.com) or the free "Monmouth County Votes" mobile app.

Vote-by-mail applications may be submitted by mail through October 29th and in-person at 300 Halls Mill Road in Freehold until 3 p.m. on November 3rd. With more ways and more days to vote, voting is easier than ever, so be sure to vote!

Another key function of the Monmouth County Clerk is as "Keeper of Records." We oversee the Monmouth County Archives Division, which is hosting our 29th annual Archives & History Day on October 26th at Brookdale Community College. The featured exhibit is called "Monmouth County Life Through the Lens: Photographs from the Evans Studio, 1943-1987." There will also be more than 50 displays relating to state and local history. The event is free, and all are invited to attend! Visit our website for details.

It is my honor to serve you as Monmouth County Clerk. If you would like to learn more about my services, visit [MonmouthCountyClerk.com](https://www.monmouthcountyclerk.com).

Surrogate Maureen T. Raisch



The Monmouth County Surrogate's Office provides various services that often go unnoticed until needed. When asked, "What does your office do?" I respond, "You will find us when you need us, and we will be here to help you."

Residents and families turn to the Office during significant life events to file, process, and complete legal matters. Our services cover a wide range of needs, including processing a loved one's will or estate, becoming a guardian for an adult in need of care, serving as the legal depository for the money left to a child from an inheritance, settlement, or life insurance proceeds, or when embarking on the journey of becoming a family through adoption.

Our dedication to excellent customer service is evident in our new e-File online service, launched earlier this year. This convenient service has been used by nearly 500 people to file and submit their estate documents, providing a sense of ease and comfort.

We are now in the testing stage of integrating AI technology for voice and website searches. This initiative aims to provide a more efficient way for our community to access valuable information and services. Some key benefits are the availability of information in multiple languages and the convenience of accessing information 24/7.

We are committed to updating and enhancing the information on our website, ensuring that you are always well-informed. For example, we are formatting a step-by-step guide to explain the complex procedures required to obtain Judgement for Guardianship, which will soon be available as a reference.

For more information, visit www.visitmonmouth.com/surrogate or call 732-431-7330.

Prosecutor Raymond S. Santiago



The Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office is proud to announce that it has launched a newly created and specialized Domestic Violence Unit.

The investigative Unit will focus on investigations and prosecutions of incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV), a term referring specifically to abuse or aggression occurring during or after a romantic relationship, involving current or former spouses or dating partners.

The Office subsection will feature a staff of six, including two Assistant Prosecutors, two Detectives, and a dedicated support staff. The Unit's work will intersect with that of partner agencies, including the Monmouth County Abuse Intervention Program, 180 Turning Lives Around, Community Affairs and Resource Center (CARC) and the Mercy Center. These programs will provide support and services to victims and those that do harm.

The Unit will operate similarly to MCPO's existing investigative units, providing logistical and on-the-ground support to local police agencies on their cases in matters such as taking victim statements and interviewing witnesses. The aim is ultimately to help victims stuck in the cycle of domestic violence free themselves – ideally, in some cases, achieving the ability to prosecute even in the absence of a victim's direct trial testimony.

"This new Unit will thoroughly reinvent how such cases are handled in Monmouth County, making all such prosecutions far more efficient and effective," County Prosecutor Raymond S. Santiago said. "Incidents of domestic violence represent by far the most common type of crime our Office prosecutes, and each case features a wide range of unique challenges facing the dedicated men and women who strive to bring these perpetrators to justice."

If you or someone you care about is actively experiencing or witnessing an incident of domestic violence, call 911 immediately.

In the absence of immediate danger, 180 Turning Lives Around maintains a Domestic Violence Hotline, reachable at 888-843-9262.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR Codes for More Information



**Monmouth County
Tourism**



**Monmouth County
Park System**



**Monmouth County
Library System**



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2024

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